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## RECENT LITERATURE.

**The Origin of the North American Flora.**—The fifteenth report of the State Geologist of Indiana, issued in March of the present year, contains a long article on the "Origin of the Indiana Flora," by John M. Coulter and Harvey Thompson. The second part of the article, beginning on page 265, is on the "Origin of the North American Flora." It is so similar in many respects to an article published by myself in the *Journal of the Cincinnati Society of Natural History* in 1881, vol. iv., that I desire to call attention to it. I have arranged in parallel columns the parallel passages. The pages are those on which the similar passages are found. My article is entitled "On the Geographical Distribution of Plants Common to Europe and the Northeast United States."

*Coulter and Thompson.*

"In studying the flora of North America one cannot help being impressed with the fact of the identity of many of our genera, and even species, with those of Europe, and especially of Eastern Asia. In the number of identical species there seems to be a closer resemblance between the floras of Eastern United States and Eastern Asia than between the floras of the Eastern United States and the Pacific slope." P. 265.

"In addition to these 342 distinct species, [referring to a printed list which contains only 328 names] there are in our flora many varieties which are indigenous to Europe, and in Europe varieties very close to some in this country. Also there are many species in this country so very near European forms that no doubt they will eventually be considered the same species, or at least varieties. Indeed, Joseph F. James supposes that one-third of the species found in Gray's Manual resemble forms in Europe. When we take into consideration the fact that the Manual covers only a very small portion of North America, it is a natural inference that when the whole flora of North America is compared with that of Europe, there will be found many other species common to both." P. 269.

"It would be easy to account for this wide distribution of species if there were not so many facts to disprove the theory advanced by Meyen in 1846, that 'there is indeed nothing more easy to perceive, in the distribution of organic beings over the globe, than the universal law, that

*James.*

"Prof. Gray has made it well known that there is far more resemblance between the plants of the Atlantic coast of the United States and the Pacific coast of Asia than between the latter and the Pacific coast of America, especially of California." P. 67.

"The resemblance between the floras of Europe and the United States is by no means confined to the 360 identical species [given in several lists]. There are, besides, many closely related species, some of which may be reduced to geographical varieties. . . . If to the identical species we add these related and representative species, we shall find that one-third of the 2277 indigenous species given in Gray's Manual resemble European forms. But the similarity between the floras of North America and Europe is by no means confined to the small territory with which I have been dealing [the Northeastern United States]. . . . I have no doubt but that a comparison of the entire flora of the United States (excluding the semi-tropical one of California . . .) will show nearly as much resemblance as I have shown exists in the small territory here dealt with." P. 66.

"Scarcely any one now believes in the assertion of an eminent authority,\* that 'there is indeed nothing more easy to perceive, in the distribution of organic beings over the globe,' etc., etc." P. 51.

\*Meyen, *Geog. of Plants*. Pub. of Roy. Society, 1846, p. 265."

*Coulter and Thompson.*

nature, in similar circumstances, has always produced similar or perfectly the same creatures." P. 270.

... "We find the scientific thought of the day to be, as expressed by Alfred Wallace, that 'every species has come into existence, coincident both in space and time with a pre-existing, closely-allied species.'" P. 270.

"Therefore, when we find identical species in two different quarters of the globe, we believe the individuals in both localities to be descended from a common parent." P. 271. [Quoted without reference.]

"Naturally we look to the north for this highway between the two continents [Europe and America]; for there is now very close connection with Asia on the northwest. . . . However, having evidence of former land elevation in high latitudes, or accepting Croll's theory in regard to the displacement of the earth's centre by a polar ice-cap, which would result in the ocean having a lower level in these latitudes in the Tertiary period than now, in either event the continental masses would be nearer together at that time, if not in actual connection." P. 271.

"As yet much of the region in the vicinity of the North Pole is unknown, but enough has been discovered to prove that there is much land within a short radius of the Pole." P. 271.

"Along with these forest-trees [sequoia, tulip, etc.] which have been preserved must have grown the shrubs and herbs which we now find coexisting with them in temperate climes." P. 272.

"As will be seen from the list of common plants given, about three-fifths of them are mountain and highland forms in the United States, and extend into Canada as lowland forms. About one-third are inhabitants of low sphagnous swamps and marshes, while the remaining small fraction might be called lowland species." P. 272.

"In North America, as these immense fields of ice moved southward they pushed all the original and introduced flora before them, forcing highland forms into lowlands, and all forms farther south." P. 273.

"Others survived in sheltered places and by very slow adaptation to climate and awaited changes, which should give them a broader field and more favorable circumstances for a better development.

*James.*

... "Wallace has expressed it, that 'every species has come into existence coincident both in space and time with a pre-existing, closely-allied species.'"† P. 51.

"† Wallace, Contrib. to Nat. Selec., N. Y., 1871, p. 5."

"Therefore, when we find identical species in two different quarters of the globe, we believe the individuals in both localities to be descended from a common parent." P. 51.

"We may very reasonably suppose that during the warm period at the north the ocean was at a lower level than it is now,‡ and that a land connection formerly existed between the northwest coast of America and the northeast coast of Asia."

"‡ In consequence of the withdrawal of large quantities of water to form the Antarctic ice-cap, and because the shifting of the earth's centre of gravity caused by this ice would have a tendency to draw the water toward the south, thus leaving much dry land at the north.—Croll, 'Climate and Time.'" P. 65.

... "The region close around the North Pole is, as yet, a *terra incognita*. We know enough of it, however, to say with certainty that there is considerable land clustered in its vicinity." P. 65.

"Innumerable herbaceous species, too, found suitable homes in the forests and plains of the north at that time." P. 54.

[The list given by Coulter and Thompson is not divided in any way, so it is not possible to see which are highland or lowland forms. But in my paper they are divided into "strictly alpine species," "sub-alpine and other species having a north or northwestern range," "species living either entirely in the water, or else in swamps, marshes, and wet places."] Pp. 56, 57, 60.

"With such a mass of ice covering the country, all animal and vegetable life must either have been destroyed or else forced to migrate southward toward warmer regions." P. 53.

"The few remaining [of list No. 1] may be forms which have been developed from others, on account of the struggle for existence which ensued when left on the mountains during their

*Coulter and Thompson.*

No doubt this gradual change, produced by an attempted adaptation to climate and surroundings, will account for many of the very nearly related species and varieties in North America and the Eastern Continent." P. 273.

"Hence we must conclude that our North American flora has originated in the far North, and once flourished around the North Pole; that it was driven south by the cold of the glacial epoch," etc. P. 274.

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return to the north, at the close of the glacial epoch." P. 57.

[I conclude] "2nd. That the species of plants common to Europe and America have had a common origin in the land about the North Pole.

"3d. That they have migrated south on account of the cold in the Arctic regions," etc. P. 67.

These passages will give an idea of the similarity in thought between the two articles. There is no reference in any place to my article, although the authors must have had it before them. I submit that it is only fair to refer to an article from which so many ideas have been gleaned.—*Joseph F. James, Miami University, Oxford, O., October 10, 1887.*

**Ridgway's Manual of Ornithology.**<sup>1</sup>—In this book we have the result of the knowledge of one of our first ornithologists, Mr. Robert Ridgway, brought fully up to date. No one is more competent for the task, and the student as well as the sportsman may rely implicitly on the statements contained in this book. The descriptions are all arranged in key form. This method is adapted to the presentation of brief definitions, especially those of the higher groups. When it comes to the presentation of the numerous characters of species it becomes awkward from a typographical point of view, and we fancy from the appearance it gives this volume that it will not replace the usual full paragraph form of description for species. In the keys of genera we observe with gratification that definitions are rarely based on color characters. The nomenclature is also thoroughly cleared up, and the results are a warning to all careless renamers. We regret, however, to observe that the author adheres to the practice of giving two identical names to a species, when the species name has been adopted for that of a genus. The result is a tautological absurdity. The references to exotic ornithology are one of the valuable features of the book.

**Synopsis of the Flora of the Laramie Group.**<sup>2</sup>—In this important paper Mr. Ward gives a general view of the subject in question, which embraces a total of 1540 species. "Of these

<sup>1</sup> A Manual of North American Birds, by Robert Ridgway. Illustrated by four hundred and sixty-four outline drawings of generic characters. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1887.

<sup>2</sup> From the Annual Report U. S. Geol. Survey of the Territories, 1886, p. 400. By Lester F. Ward.